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SUGGESTIONS TO LEADERS OF CLASSES USING THE COURSE "THE MESSAGE OF JESUS TO OUR MODERN LIFE"¹

STUDY V

THE FAMILY

There is a great tendency among modern students of social life to bemoan the loosening of family bonds and to berate the laws of the country therefor. There are others who feel that larger freedom for individual development demands even less stringent marriage laws. But few of those who are discussing these questions place sufficient emphasis upon the constructive process of creating higher ideals of family life and a greater sense of responsibility in the relation of the family to society at large.

Upon the Christian church seems to devolve the task of educating its young people in the highest ideal of marriage and the establishment of the highest type of family life. Young women especially are drawn to occupations and professions which seem to them to offer larger freedom than the duties of the home, frequently because the home life with which they are familiar is not ideal. Young men assume carelessly relationships which promise anything but rewards of Christian fellowship.

No greater service can be rendered by the church than the nurturing of choice family groups which will not only safeguard the young people but give them ample opportunity for individual development. The work of no single month in the present course is more important than this one, when we are to consider the question of the Christian family.

A program might discuss the following topics, the leader choosing that one which it seems to him could be least easily handled by members of the class.

1. Ideals of the family current in the world of 1500 B.C.
2. The development of the standards of the family made by the Hebrews previous to the coming of Christ.
3. Reading, *The Ideal Woman from the Hebrew Point of View* (Prov. 31:10-31).
4. The family experiences of Jesus.
5. Summary of Jesus' ideals of the family as he would have wished to see them worked out in his own day.
6. The Christian family as it should be today. A constructive statement based on the teaching of Jesus.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Does Jesus directly or indirectly teach equality of the sexes?
2. In what ways is the attitude of Jesus toward children finding expression in Christian countries today?

The second program may frankly take up the question of marriage and divorce. Few members of the group will be acquainted with the legal aspects of the subject as presented by his own state, and few will have considered how many governable elements enter into the question of marriage and divorce. There is no ques-

¹ These suggestions relate to the work of the fifth month of the course, the material for which appear in this number of the *Biblical World*. The whole course may be obtained in leaflets for use with classes by registered members of the Institute. Registration fee, 50 cents plus 4 cents postage. Address: THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE, The University of Chicago Chicago, Ill.

tion, however, which comes to the attention of all people so frequently through the daily papers and so seldom in the pulpit and school. Perhaps one of the best ways to handle this subject is to give out a series of questions which will lead the members of the class to do some investigating on their own account. The following questions are taken from Henderson's *Social Duties from the Christian Point of View*. The leader may assign special topics to different members of the group and leave such as he thinks best for general treatment in the class.

1. What are the customs of courtship in the locality and community? What is faulty in them?

2. Has the church any rule of discipline on the subject?

3. Does the law of the state offer any regulation of the social relation of the sexes previous to marriage?

4. Can anything be done by the class to produce a purer, more sober, and rational custom in the neighborhood?

5. Would a fashion of "chaperonage" be advisable?

6. What is the law of marriage in your own state?

7. What license is required, and how is it obtained?

8. What record is made of marriages in the county? How many marriages are not recorded? How many ministers and others officiating neglect to return certificates for record? Information can be obtained of the registering clerk.

9. What persons and officials are authorized to perform the legal ceremony?

10. Among the cases of divorce which have come to your own notice which one do you think could have been avoided by (a) less haste to marry, (b) higher moral standards in the community?

11. What was Jesus' attitude toward marriage after divorce?

12. Can you trace any good or evil spiritual consequences of the physical sur-

roundings of particular families? Bring these to the attention of the class.

13. Do you know of any dwellings which are unfit for human habitation? Discuss ways of improving the conditions.

14. Has your community any ideal of duty on the subject of dwellings? What evidence have you for your opinion?

15. How far are the problems of the church becoming complicated by the entrance of women into industrial life?

16. Do you know families where industrial conditions prevent ideal family life?

17. Give ways in which the general life of your community might be bettered by the application of the principles of Jesus.

Above all, it is hoped that the class will leave the subject with the conviction which is emphasized by the author of our course in his closing paragraphs, namely, that this is a problem to be solved by the intelligent and persistent application of the principle of Christian love as presented in the teaching of Jesus. To teach this principle is the province of the church and not of the courts, and our young people must be trained to take that point of view, not only through their own lives in Christian homes with Christian parents, but by their own thinking as well. The leader has a rare opportunity in this subject. He should in some way see to it that the families of his church are reached by the message the teaching of Jesus brings concerning the Christian family.

REFERENCE READING

Mathews, *The Church and the Changing Order*, pp. 200-7; Chadwick, *Social Relationships in the Light of Christianity*, pp. 12-17, 102-17, 174-87, 267-71; Hall, *Social Solutions*, pp. 282-94; Mathews, *Social Teaching of Jesus*, chap. iv; Peabody, *Jesus Christ and the Social Question*, chap. iii; Henderson, *Social Duties*, chaps. ii and iii.

Hastings' *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels* on: "Family," "Divorce," "Marriage," "Children," "Women"; also in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, both single and four-volume editions.